

Volume IX- Ottis Toole File
File 9
BSO Sgt. Scheff memo re: Toole
10/24/88

NICK NAVARRO
SHERIFF
BROWARD COUNTY
P.O. BOX 9507
FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA 33310

DATE: October 24, 1988

H 88-10-056

MEMO TO: Captain Walter Laun, Commander/Criminal Investigations
VIA/Chain of Command

FROM: Sergeant Richard Scheff, Supervisor/Homicide Unit

SUBJECT: Interview With Ottis Toole

On 17th of October, 1988 this writer was instructed to report to Lieutenant Saxon's Office and attend a briefing. Present at this meeting were Captain Laun, Lieutenant Saxon and Sergeant Fantigrassi. Lieutenant Saxon provided this writer and Sergeant Fantigrassi with a photocopy of a handwritten letter addressed to Sheriff Navarro. The letter indicated that one Ottis Toole, an inmate at Florida State Prison, was responsible for the murder of Adam Walsh and other unidentified Broward County murders. The letter had been written by one Gerald Schaffer, also an inmate at the prison. Schaffer stated that Toole was willing to admit his involvement in the murders. Schaffer set several conditions for Toole's cooperation. Briefly, they were that Schaffer was to be present at all interviews with Toole; that the interviews be of short duration; and that Schaffer and Toole be relocated to the Broward County Jail.

Captain Laun advised this writer and Sergeant Fantigrassi that we were to respond to Florida State Prison, meet with Schaffer and Toole, and assess the validity of Schaffer's claims. Captain Laun further advised that due to Ottis Toole's history of recanting his confessions, we were to try to obtain some form of evidence that would corroborate Toole's statements.

On 19th October, 1988, this writer and Sergeant Fantigrassi met with Gerald Schaffer. Briefly, Schaffer reported that he became acquainted with Ottis Toole while both men were at Florida State Prison, and that he is functioning as Ottis Toole's legal representative. Schaffer advised that he is interested in claiming the reward monies available for the clearance of the Adam Walsh case. Schaffer stated that Ottis Toole had admitted to having abducted and

murdered Adam Walsh. Schaffer said that Ottis Toole was willing to confess to the Walsh murder, and would be willing to appear before a Grand Jury. Schaffer reported that according to Toole, Adam Walsh's body had been dismembered, partially devoured and discarded in a canal. Schaffer advised that Toole had also admitted to numerous murders in Broward County in the vicinity of U.S. 27 and south of State Road 84. Schaffer was unable to provide any further information about these other murders.

This writer and Sergeant Fantigrassi informed Gerald Schaffer that neither he nor Ottis Toole would be taken out of prison until such time as verifiable independent evidence was obtained which supported Toole's account of any of his crimes. Schaffer agreed to this demand, and reported that in the Walsh case Toole had used a knife and a bayonet to cut the body up. Schaffer advised that Toole would be able to provide a more detailed description of these weapons.

On 20th October, 1988, this writer and Sergeant Fantigrassi met with Gerald Schaffer and Ottis Toole. This writer read Ottis Toole the Miranda Warning, which Toole acknowledged in an affirmative manner. Briefly, Toole stated that he had killed Adam Walsh and was ready to testify in court about his actions. Toole reported that he used a straight knife with a black plastic handle and the bayonet to kill the victim and cut up the body. Toole advised that the knife has been in the custody of the Jacksonville authorities since his arrest. Toole said that the knife had been seized from his car by a Detective Buddy Terry. Toole further advised that the bayonet belongs to his sister, one Vinette Syphurs. According to Toole, the bayonet is part of a display mounted on his sister's living room wall. Toole reported that his sister resides in Bostwick, Florida. When asked to disclose the location of the body of Adam Walsh, Ottis Toole reported that he had thrown the various parts of the victim's body in the canal along the Florida Turnpike over a ten mile stretch of road. Toole stated that the other body parts would be in the same general vicinity as the head, which had been located near the 130 Mile Marker of the Florida Turnpike. Toole was unable to provide any more specific location for the body. During the interview Gerald Schaffer was observed to prompt Toole with several of his responses. It is unclear how

much of Toole's account of this incident is the product of Gerald Schaffer's influence. The interview with Toole and Schaffer was then terminated.

After reviewing the information obtained from Toole, the only verifiable evidence discussed appeared to be the knives described by Toole in his statement. This writer and Sergeant Fantigrassi then responded to Bostwick, Florida, in an attempt to locate Vinette Syphurs. Upon arrival contact was made with a U.S. postal employee who reported that the Syphurs had moved and left no forwarding address. The letter carrier advised that the Syphurs used to live at 2942 Cedar Creek Road. This writer and Sergeant Fantigrassi responded to this address and made contact with the homeowner, one Violet Flack. Mrs. Flack reported that she had never heard of Vinette Syphurs, and could provide no further information. This writer and Sergeant Fantigrassi then canvassed the area and made contact with one Charles B. Council of 2941 Cedar Creek Road. Mr. Council reported that a Rodney and Vinette Syphurs had moved out of 2942 Cedar Creek Road about a year earlier. Mr. Council had no information regarding their present whereabouts. This writer and Sergeant Fantigrassi responded to the Putnam County Tax Assessor's office and discovered that 2942 Cedar Creek Road had been purchased by David and Violet Flack from one Ralph Nelson Green of Jacksonville, FL. This writer and Sergeant Fantigrassi responded to the Putnam County Clerk's Office and discovered that Mr. Green had evicted Rodney and Vinette Syphurs from the residence in December of 1987. Mr. Green had been represented by a Jacksonville attorney, one Wesley Wallace in this matter. This writer contacted Mr. Wallace at his office and learned that the Syphurs were now living with Vinette's daughter who was married to a man named Greg Bishop. Mr. Wallace believed that the Bishop's resided in Orange Park, Florida. With the assistance of the Clay County Sheriff's Office, contact was made with Greg Bishop who agreed to have his mother-in-law, Vinette Syphurs, contact us.

At approximately 9:00PM this writer, Sergeant Fantigrassi and Lieutenant Redmond of the Clay County Sheriff's Office met with Vinette and Rodney Syphurs. Mrs. Syphurs reported that she purchased an antique bayonet in 1979. According to Vinette Syphurs, the bayonet was mounted on her living

room wall and she insisted that she would have noticed it's absence had her brother removed it for any period of time. Vinette Syphurs advised that she had moved in with her daughter to escape the hounding of the press since her brother's arrest. As a result of the move, much of the Syphur's personal property had been placed in storage. Vinette Syphurs agreed to turn over the weapon to Lieutenant Redmond as soon as she could locate it.

On 21st October, 1988, this writer and Sergeant Fantigrassi responded to the Duval County Sheriff's Office. Their records indicate that in November of 1983, Detective Buddy Terry recovered a machete from the trunk of Toole's car. The weapon was turned over to the FDLE Crime Lab for analysis in regards to the Adam Walsh case. The weapon was eliminated from consideration subsequent to it's examination.

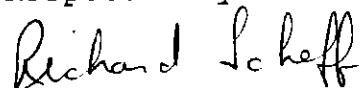
On 21st October, 1988, Vinette Syphurs surrendered the bayonet to the Clay County Sheriff's Office who will forward this item to the Broward County Sheriff's Office. Upon arrival the bayonet will be examined by our Crime Laboratory for the presence of blood. The bayonet can also be examined by the Medical Examiner's Office for comparison to the wounds present on the victim's head.

No review of this matter would be complete without a thorough understanding of the background of Ottis Toole's original confession in the Adam Walsh case. In 1983 when Toole and Henry Lee Lucas were in custody in Texas they began confessing to hundreds of murders. Many of their confessions were later found to be false. The Duval County Sheriff's Office became involved in the investigation as Toole is from the Jacksonville, Florida area. Presently Toole is in prison in reference to a Duval County murder. Detective Terry, who had been assigned to the Homicide Unit in 1983, was a member of the team who met with Ottis Toole. Apparently believing that he could enrich himself, Terry entered into an arrangement with Ottis Toole in regards to book and movie rights to Ottis Toole's life story. Detective Terry then provided Ottis Toole with confidential information he had obtained from the Hollywood Police Department. Detective Terry then contacted Hollywood and told them that Toole had confessed to the Adam Walsh murder. Detectives from the Hollywood Police Department responded to Jacksonville and invested one year in the investigation before uncovering Detective Terry's actions. Ottis Toole's statements were dismissed, and Detective Terry was removed from the Homicide Unit.

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Interview With Ottis Toole

From this historical prospective one can readily detect the ease with which Toole, a brain-damaged and troubled man can be manipulated by others. Ottis Toole now appears to be under the influence of Gerald Schaffer who may be using Toole for his own purposes.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard Scheff". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent 'R' and 'S'.

Sergeant Richard Scheff

RS/bf

MODE = TRANSMISSION

START=FEB-05 15:23

END=FEB-05 15:27

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***** (FAX-900 V1.35) ** -STATE ATTY - ***** - *****

FAX TRANSMISSION

STATE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
ADMINISTRATION
201 S.E. SIXTH STREET, SUITE 665
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To: Det. Richard Scheff **Date:** February 5, 1996

Fax #: 797-0928

From: Ralph J. Ray, Jr., CASA

Subject: Ottis Toole

Five (5) pages including this cover sheet

CITY OF HOLLYWOOD, FLORIDA

INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

10/21/88

TO: Chief Richard Witt
Deputy Chief R. S. Davis
Major B. W. Davis

DATE: October 24, 1988

FILE:

SUBJECT:

FROM: *Det. J. Hoffman*
Det. J. Hoffman
Homicide Unit

REFERENCES:

This detective received a telephone call on 10/24/88 from Sgt. Richard Scheff of the Broward County Sheriff's Department.

The nature of this call pertained to the recent trip to Raiford Prison by Sgt. Scheff and Sgt. Fantagrassi.

During the week of 10/17/88, Sgt. Scheff and Sgt. Fantagrassi went to Raiford Prison to conduct an interview with prisoner, Gerard J. Schaffer. Mr. Schaffer recently wrote letters to various police departments, including the Broward Sheriff's Department. In these letters, Schaffer states that he is a cellmate of Ottis Toole and also does legal appeals for fellow inmates.

Mr. Schaffer tells how Ottis Toole has spoken to him frequently about the Adam Walsh Murder. Mr. Schaffer believes that Toole is telling him the truth. Toole also gave Schaffer a hand written confession to the Walsh Murder.

According to Sgt. Scheff, after interviewing Schaffer, it is his opinion that Schaffer is strictly interested in this matter because he thinks he would be entitled to the reward money offered by the Walsh Family. Schaffer believes the reward money is in excess of \$100,000.00.

Gerald Schaffer informed Sgt. Scheff that he represents Ottis Toole in all further matters. Schaffer stated he must be present at all interviews conducted with Ottis Toole in the future. Should Otis Toole be taken out on location, Mr. Schaffer indicates that he must accompany Toole and the Law Enforcement Agency.

Gerald Schaffer informed Sgt. Scheff that Ottis Toole told him that he used a bayonet to commit the Walsh Murder. This bayonet was taken from Ottis Toole's sister's residence in Jacksonville.

Sgt. Scheff and Sgt. Fantagrassi proceeded to locate Toole's sister. Upon doing this, Toole's sister was interviewed by these detectives. Toole's sister informed Sgt. Scheff that she had obtained the bayonet in question in 1979. This bayonet has been hanging on her mantel since the year she obtained it. According to her, if Ottis would have taken this bayonet she would have been fully aware of it.

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She assured the detectives that the bayonet has never left her residence.

Ottis Toole's sister agreed to cooperate by furnishing the bayonet to the Sheriff's Department to be forwarded to the Crime Lab.

It is the opinion of Sgt. Scheff and Sgt. Fantagrassi that Gerard J. Schaffer is interested in this matter strictly for his own personal benefits. There is no evidence at this time to link Ottis Toole to the Walsh Murder.

JH/ab